



Theatre
Communications
Group

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PRESS CONTACTS

Corinna Schulenburg | cschulenburg@tcg.org | 212.609.5941

Pakistani Playwright Shahid Nadeem to Deliver International World Theatre Day Message 2020

*On the 72nd Anniversary of the **International Theatre Institute***

“In our engagement with the challenges of the present, we deprive ourselves of the possibilities of a deeply moving spiritual experience which theatre can provide. In today’s world where bigotry, hate and violence is on the rise once again, nations seem to be pitted against nations, believers are fighting other believers and communities are spewing hatred against other communities... Theatre has a role, a noble role, in energizing and mobilizing humanity to lift itself from its descent into the abyss. It can uplift the stage, the performance space, into something sacred.”

- Shahid Nadeem, playwright and executive director of Ajoka Theatre

New York, NY – The Global Theater Initiative (GTI), a partnership between Theatre Communications Group (TCG) and The Laboratory for Performance and Politics (The Lab) at Georgetown University, invites all theatres, individual artists, institutions, and audiences to celebrate the 59th annual **World Theatre Day on March 27, 2020**. Each year, a renowned theatre artist of world stature is invited by the International Theatre Institute (ITI) Worldwide in Shanghai to craft an international message to mark the global occasion. This year the message has been written by Pakistani playwright **Shahid Nadeem**. The message has been translated into multiple languages. Read all the World Theatre Day Messages [here](#).

“In a time of rising Islamophobia, Shahid Nadeem’s message reminds us of the sacred humanizing role that theatre can and must play,” said **Teresa Eyring**, executive director of TCG. “We hope this message serves as inspiration to all culture-makers working across borders.”

Since 1962, World Theatre Day has been celebrated by the circulation of the World Theatre Day Message. The first World Theatre Day international message was written by Jean Cocteau. Succeeding honorees have included Arthur Miller (1963), Ellen Stewart (1975), Vaclav Havel (1994), Ariane Mnouchkine (2005), Sultan bin Mohammad Al Qasimi (2007), Augusto Boal (2009), Dame Judi Dench (2010), Jessica A. Kaahwa (2011) and Anatoli Vassiliev (2017). In 2019, the International World Theatre Message was given by Carlos Celdrán, and the U.S. World Theatre Message by Larissa FastHorse, Ty Defoe, and Jenny Marlowe of Indigenous Direction. TCG and GTI have announced the 2020 World Theatre Day message on the [TCG website](#).

To celebrate World Theatre Day 2020, GTI is asking theatre fans around the world to tweet and post their messages about why theatre is vital to them in the time of coronavirus, using the hashtag #VitalOverViral. TCG will repost messages to their social media accounts. GTI also recommends sharing the international and U.S. messages on or around March 27 through program notes, curtain speeches and online media; tweet about World Theatre Day using the hashtag #WorldTheatreDay; following TCG, The Lab, and ITI on social media platforms for updates and sharing World Theatre Day-related posts. Social handles for GTI: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#); for TCG: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#); for The Lab: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#).

TCG and GTI also urge you to take action by [signing up to receive TCG Action Alerts](#) and contacting your elected officials regarding the need for improved visa processing for international guest artists ([Issue Brief](#)) and increased funding for the Cultural Programs Division of the State Department ([Issue Brief](#)); host a roundtable with your community to discuss the themes related to World Theatre Day; offer ticket discounts in celebration of the day; or make your backstage space available for audiences to tour.

Learn more about World Theatre Day and GTI's international programming [here](#).

Shahid Nadeem is Pakistan's leading playwright and executive director of the renowned Ajoka Theatre. Nadeem was born in 1947 in Sopore, Kashmir. He became a refugee at the tender age of one, when his family had to migrate to the newly-created Pakistan after the 1948 war between India and Pakistan over the disputed state of Kashmir. He received his Masters in Psychology from Punjab University. He wrote his first play as a university student but became a dedicated playwright during his political exile in London, when he started contributing plays for Pakistan's dissident theatre group, Ajoka - a company founded by Madeeha Gauhar, a pioneer theatre activist, whom Nadeem later married. Shahid Nadeem has written more than 50 original plays in Punjabi and Urdu and several adaptations of Brecht's plays. Read Nadeem's full bio [here](#).

The Global Theater Initiative (GTI) was launched in February 2016 by Theatre Communications Group and the Laboratory for Global Performance and Politics (the Lab), based in Washington, DC at Georgetown University. By combining the unique reach of TCG's international programming with the Lab's distinctive experience in humanizing global politics through the power of performance, GTI strengthens, nurtures, and promotes global citizenship and international collaboration in the U.S. professional and educational theatre field. It also honors and intersects with the work so many theatre colleagues have invested in cross-cultural exchange and understanding. Through the alignment of programming and resources, the GTI partners serve as a hub of global exchange with three core areas of focus: connecting practitioners with resources, knowledge, and partnerships to strengthen their work; promoting cultural collaboration as essential for international peace and mutual understanding; and innovating new strategies to maximize the global theatre field's opportunities and impact. GTI also serves as the collaborative leadership of the U.S. Center of the International Theatre Institute (ITI/U.S.).

International Theatre Institute (ITI) was formed in 1948, when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) joined with world-renowned theatre experts to form an international non-governmental organization in the field of the performing arts. The mission of ITI is to "promote international exchange of knowledge and practice in theatre arts in order to consolidate peace and friendship between peoples, to deepen mutual understanding and to increase creative cooperation between all people in the theatre arts." Today, ITI consists of approximately 90 Centers worldwide. An ITI Center is made up of professionals active in the theatre life of a country and representative of all branches of the performing arts. For more information, visit www.iti-worldwide.org.

The Laboratory for Global Performance and Politics harnesses the power of performance to humanize global politics. Since 2012, we have created and presented innovative, high-quality work from around the world that is at the intersection of politics and performance. The Lab's signature approach raises voices rarely heard in Washington, DC through compelling, authentic narratives, and engages policymakers, artists, and wider audiences in forums that cast critical issues in a new light. As a signature joint-initiative between the School of Foreign Service and the Georgetown College, The Lab is passionate about helping to train the next generation of innovators to use their artistry and voices to shape new understandings and to humanize others in pursuit of a better, more just world. In Spring 2019, The Lab launched CrossCurrents, a DC-wide biennial festival, that will feature dynamic, socially-engaged performances from around the world and will catalyze conversations around critical topics like the global refugee crisis, climate change, and the rise of hate and polarization. For more information, please visit: GlobalLab.Georgetown.edu or @TheLabGU.

Theatre Communications Group (TCG) exists to strengthen, nurture, and promote professional theatre in the U.S. and globally. Since its founding in 1961, TCG's constituency has grown from a handful of groundbreaking theatres to over 700 Member Theatres and affiliate organizations and nearly 10,000 Individual Members. Through its Core Values of Activism, Artistry, Diversity, and Global Citizenship, TCG advances a better world for theatre and a better world because of theatre. TCG offers its members networking and knowledge-building opportunities through research, communications, and events, including the annual TCG National Conference, one of the largest nationwide gatherings of theatre people; awards grants and scholarships, approximately \$2 million per year, to theatre companies and individual artists; advocates on the federal level; and through the Global Theater Initiative, TCG's partnership with the Laboratory for Global Performance and Politics, serves as the U.S. Center of the International Theatre Institute. TCG is North America's largest independent trade publisher of dramatic literature, with 17 Pulitzer Prizes for Drama on the TCG booklist. It also publishes the award-winning *American Theatre* magazine and ARTSEARCH®, the essential source for a career in the arts. In all of its endeavors, TCG seeks to increase the organizational efficiency of its Member Theatres, cultivate and celebrate the artistic talent and achievements of the field, and promote a larger public understanding of, and appreciation for, the theatre. www.tcg.org.

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